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REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ending

DECEMBER 31ST, 1943.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
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PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

Medical Officer of Health:

NORMAN MACFADYEN, M.B., D.P.H., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

123, Norton Way, Letchworth.
(Phone: Letchworth 12)

Senior Sanitary Inspector:

SAMUEL T. GUNNING, Cert. S.I.E.B., F.S.I.A.

Additional Inspector:

JOHN M. BLADON, Cert. S.I.E.J.B., M.S.I.A., M.R.S.III.

21, Bancroft, Hitchin.
(Phone: Hitchin 811-2.

Council Offices:
9, Bancroft, Hitchin.

A.E. PASSINGHAM, Clerk to the Council.
(Phone: Hitchin 406).

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH for the year ending 31ST DECEMBER, 1943.

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

In presenting my Twenty-ninth Annual Report on the conditions affecting the health of the District, I do so in accordance with the terms of the Ministry, and include therein such statistics as may be given which are relevant thereto.

Section A.

Statistics and Social Conditions of the District.

Area (in acres)	82,559.
Residential Population. (Registrar-General's Figure).. ...	20,990.
Rateable value	£100,466.
Sum represented by a penny rate.. ...£	401.0.3d.
Number of parishes in District... ...	34.

Again the figure given by the Registrar-General reflects on the war-time movement of the population, showing a slight decrease, and in my view, is nearing what might be termed the static population of the district.

Vital Statistics.

Births.

Legitimate - Male, 175; Female, 158) Total, 355.
Illegitimate- Male, 9; Female, 13) Birth-rate, 16.

Deaths.

Male, 105; Female, 126. Total, 231. Death-rate, 11.

Deaths of Infants under one year.

Legitimate -	Male, 12; Female, 4)	Total:
Illegitimate-	Male, 1; Female, 1)	18.

Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 births) = 50.

Still Births.

Legitimate -	Male, 4; Female, 3)	Total:
Illegitimate-	Male, 1; Female, 0)	8.

Still-Birth Rate - ·37.

The chief causes of death were as follows:-

Cerebro Spinal Fever.	1.
Whooping Cough.	1.
Tuberculosis.	5.
Influenza.	7.
Malignant Disease	36.
Circulatory Disease	77.
Pulmonary Disease	37.
Infant Diarrhoea.	1.
Violence.	15.

There were no deaths from Measles, Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria, or connected with Maternity.

Infectious Diseases.

Chickenpox.	57.
Diphtheria.	1.
Erysipelas.	1.
Jaundice.	1.
Measles.	98.
Pneumonia.	8.
Puerperal Pyrexia.	5.
Scarlet Fever	19.
Sonne Dysentry	1.
Tuberculosis	31.
Whooping Cough	34.
Total.	256.

The Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria Cases were treated at the North Herts. Isolation Hospital, which with the annexe at South Lodge, Baldock, is managed by the North Herts. (Joint) Hospital Board.

The Puerperal Fever Cases occurred in Maternity Homes in the District.

Considering the large number of Whooping Cough and Measles Cases notified, we were fortunate in having only one fatal case of whooping cough.

It is remarkable that there was only one case of Diphtheria notified and that was in a non-immunised person.

The figures show a very good state of health in general.

School Inspection.

This points to the conclusion that rationing with better distribution of food and the provision of dinners, has produced a better state of health, in spite of the restriction of the variety of food. I have come to the reluctant conclusion that restriction of sweets is also a good thing, and probably the limited supply makes them more appreciated.

Immunisation against Diphtheria.

This has apparently been a great success and it should be kept up. The percentage of immunisation is very high in the District. Some villages have approached 100%.

The possibility of Small-pox arriving in this Country at any time, has drawn attention to the unsatisfactory state of vaccination prevalent. People who have any doubt about whether they should get vaccinated, should do so at once.

Section B.

General Provision of Health Services.

1. Public Health Officials.

(a) Medical.

The Medical Officer of Health is a part-time Officer holding a Diploma in Public Health. He is also Medical Officer of Health for Hitchin Urban and Royston Urban Districts; is Assistant School Medical Officer for the County and Medical Superintendent of the Isolation Hospital.

(b) Sanitary.

The Senior Sanitary Inspector holds the Certificate of the Sanitary Inspectors' Examination Board (London) 1920, including the qualification as an Inspector of Meat and other foods.

The Additional Sanitary Inspector holds the Certificate of the Sanitary Inspectors' Examination (Joint) Board and also the Certificate of the R.S.I. as an Inspector of Meat and other foods.

(c) Clerical. - Miss M.D.E. Sayer.

Laboratory facilities, Hospital facilities, etc.

The arrangements with reference to these services continue as in former years, with the exception that the majority of pathological specimens are now submitted by Medical Practitioners, to the Emergency Laboratory Service at Cambridge.

Section C.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Water Supplies.

Fortunately by reason of the good work done by the Council just prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the District is in a good position with regard to water supplies, so much so that even during the recent abnormal dry spell, the district had adequate supplies with a few exceptions where isolated shallow wells failed to yield their usual supply.

Of the 34 parishes in the district, 31 have piped supplies. There are still, however, outlying parts in some of the parishes, and the parish of Hexton in particular, where the extension of the piped supplies could, with advantage, be undertaken as part of the immediate Post-War programme.

Examination of Supplies.

The usual routine sampling of water, as delivered to the consumer, has been carried out with the following results:-

(2) samples were taken and submitted for full Bacteriological and Chemical Examination.

(37) samples taken and submitted for Bacteriological Examination only.

Of these, 33 were entirely satisfactory.

In addition to this routine sampling, the Engineer and Surveyor regularly takes samples of water from the various boreholes both prior to, and after chlorination.

Sewage and Sewage Disposal.

Here in their Post-War programme of urgent works, the Council's field of endeavour for the benefit of the Rural population, is second only to, if not equal with, their pre-war effort to provide a wholesome water supply to the district, which has had such excellent results.

Refuse Collection and Disposal: and Salvage.

This service is standing well up to war conditions and underwent a severe strain during a period of the year under review, owing to the breakdown of the Salvage Lorry which had to be taken off the road; consequently throwing a greater strain upon the remaining two freighters. Happily this was overcome towards the end of the year with the new vehicle obtained, which is now doing excellent work, the volume of materials collected being reflected in the regular monthly reports submitted.

The total for the year under review is as follows:-

Approximate weight collected of all materials - 2,596 tons.

Of this amount, 270 tons of salvage materials were recovered and sold, yielding an income of £1,125,11.3d.

The department has been able to deal very efficiently with salvage material, consequent upon the purchase of a small power baling press which deals with tins in an efficient and expeditious manner. The cost of this machine, together with the cost of the new lorry, is reflected in the reduced profits compared with last year, the figures being approximately £150. for the year ending the 31st March 1944, compared with £500. for the year ending the 31st March 1943.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

The figures given in the following table, taken from the carefully prepared work sheet kept by your Sanitary Inspectors, shows a considerable increase in the number of inspections carried out, compared with those of the previous year, and is an indication of the amount of work that can be undertaken by your two Inspectors in the course of a complete year.

Mr. Bladen, who commenced his duties on the 8th January of the year under review, has put forward a consistent effort in routine inspections generally and housing inspections in particular.

The figures supplied are as follows:-

Total number of inspections for all purposes - 4,588.

Divided as follows:-

For defects under the Housing Acts.	738.
For defects under the Factory & Workshop Acts.. ...	59.
For the prevention of Infectious Diseases.	140.
As to the Sanitary Condition of Schools & Public Halls.	15.
Inspections under the Milk & Dairies Order.	1,373.
Inspections of slaughter-houses, butchers shops, etc.	529.
For the prevention of Nuisances.	159.
Inspections of drainage, conversions, etc.	226.
Inspections of water supplies and sampling.	174.
Supervision of Refuse Collection and Salvage Disposal.	293.
Supervision of Salvage.	393.
Inspections re Rats and Mice Destruction.	30.
Inspections under Shops Act, 1934.	42.
Unclassified (A.R.P., Food Decontamination, etc). ...	417.

Section D.

Housing.

It will be noted in the foregoing table giving the summary of inspections made, a relatively large number of houses have been inspected. Approximately 90 per cent of these have been properly surveyed and detailed particulars taken and recorded under the provisions of the Housing Act, with a view to future action in connection with Post-War Housing.

Towards the end of the year there was a noteable increase in the amount of work being undertaken for the repair and reconditioning of houses. This is a good sign and it is hoped that owners will take full advantage of the opportunities afforded in Circular No. 2871, to carry out as much essential work as the available labour and material will allow.

The provision of new dwelling houses which, as stated in my previous report, had reached a very low level has, during the year under review, reached zero, there being no new dwelling houses of any description completed during the year 1943.

It is true that during the year a start was made for the erection of 12 cottages for agricultural workers; and it is hoped that by the time this report appears, some of them will be ready for occupation. Your Surveyor is to be congratulated on the type of cottage and the accommodation provided therein. I should be happy to be able to visualize that all agricultural workers in the Rural District of Hitchin would be as satisfactorily housed during the next 10 years as those fortunate enough to secure the tenancy of the cottages now in course of erection.

In this connection the Council have a not too easy task in deciding on the best action to be taken in respect of many of the rural cottages which are obsolete in character and design and offer little, if any, scope for the provision of the amenities and facilities which housewives at the present day now expect - nay demand.

Sanitary Improvements.

In spite of restrictions as to labour and materials, works for the sanitary improvements of dwelling houses, is continuing to occupy a fair portion of your Inspectors' time.

The figures for the year are as follows:-

Re-drainage.	20.
Sanitary Improvements, including drainage.	12.
Other improvements and alterations. ...	56.

Two Abatement Notices were outstanding at December 31st, 1943.

No applications were received for Grants under the Housing (Rural Workers) Act.

Section E.

Inspection and Supervision of Food.

Milk Supply.

There are now 160 Registered Producers or Producer-Retailers, 32 of which are licenced for the production of Accredited Milk, and 12 for the production of Tuberculin Tested Milk, while 22 registered dairymen carry on the trade of Retail Purveyors only within the district.

As will be seen from the summary of inspections made, those referring to Milk & Dairies premises, show a considerable increase in the amount of work carried out, from which we have every reason to hope for a continued improvement in the methods of production.

In addition to visits paid, your Sanitary Inspectors have taken samples for examination as follows:-

(A) Milk (Special Designations) Order, as agents for the County Council.....80.

(b) National Milk Testing & Advisory Scheme, co-operating with the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries.....167.

The samples in Category A are collected and forwarded to the Ministry's Laboratory at Cambridge, while samples in

Category B are collected in the early morning by your Inspectors, for the Ministry's Laboratory Assistant to pick up at Hitchin to take to St. Albans for examination. Results of all samples are communicated to the Public Health Department, 82.99% of which are satisfactory.

In all cases of unsatisfactory samples of Designated Milks, following up visits are made and further samples taken until satisfaction is obtained. Where unsatisfactory results are communicated to the Producers under the National Milk Testing & Advisory Scheme, officials of the War Agricultural Executive Committee have carried out the necessary enquiries.

It is with mixed feelings one learns of the possible transfer of this Advisory work on Milk Production, from the Local Authorities to a Central Authority. I am satisfied - so far as the Hitchin Rural District is concerned - that no complaint lies on the score of inadequate or unsatisfactory supervisory work.

Meat and other Foods.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is no actual slaughtering carried out within the district, increased activity has been shown during the year by reason of the need for more constant inspection in meat supplies, not only in butchers' shops, but of the large quantities of stored foods in the district, and the fact that before any food in camps, canteens and stores, can be dealt with as unfit for human food, a Certificate from your Inspectors has to be obtained.

Bakehouses and other Food Stores have not been overlooked, while the British Restaurants and Canteens throughout the district have been visited, both with reference to the food stocks and the conditions under which meals are provided, and I am happy to report that the standard of cleanliness in these premises, has been reported as highly satisfactory.

Table of New Cases and Mortality for the year.

Age Periods.	New Cases. Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory.		Deaths. Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0- 1.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1- 5.	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
5-15.	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-
15-25.	3	2	-	2	-	-	1	-
25-35.	3	2	-	1	-	-	1	-
35-45.	2	2	1	-	2	-	-	-
45-55.	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
55-65.	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
and over.	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Totals.	11.	10.	4.	6.	2.	1.	2.	1.

From a perusal of the above table, you will note that 31 new Cases of Tuberculosis were reported during the year, compared with 26 for the year 1942. It is, however, pleasing to bring to your notice that 4 patients suffering from Tuberculosis were reported cured.

Conclusion.

On the whole, I feel this is a good Report, though not perhaps as progressive as in normal years, but I am satisfied that the good groundwork referred to in my last Report has continued throughout the year and that your Officials have accumulated a fund of information and prepared for consideration useful proposals for Post-War application, and that your labours in considering these matters in Committee, command sincere appreciation.

I would, therefore, again express my thanks to the members of the Council, the Clerk, Surveyor, and your two Sanitary Inspectors, for their readiness at all times to co-operate to the full in all matters in which the health of the public is, or is, likely, to be reflected.

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) NORMAN MACFADYEN.

Medical Officer of Health.

31.5.44.